

CHAPTER VII

A TOUR rsr ITALY

1826

Twelve months' continual strain and excitement were too much for a constitution that was never really robust. In June we hear of serious illness, and in an opportune hour, when the need of rest and change had become apparent, there came an invitation from the Austens to accompany them in a tour through Switzerland and Northern Italy. The invitation was at once accepted.

To Benjamin Austen.

[/«&(?), 1826.]

DEAB AUSTEN,

Having met many "women who were too beautiful at the last night's dance, I slept off the memory of their loveliness by an extra three hours of oblivion, and was therefore unable to answer your note immediately; which, however, I am now doing surrounded by a much better breakfast than graced your board this morning.

A devil, though an ugly name, is certainly the wisest style of *dejeuner* — an innocent egg perhaps the silliest: why I say innocent I know not, for certainly if a devilled turkey's leg is the real limb of Satan, the other article may not, inaptly be considered the 'yoke of sin.

According to your advice, I have 'perused your note with attention and considered your offer with care/ and, as the man says who is going to be hired, <I think the situation will suit.³ It ill befits any man to dilate on his own excellence, but I may perhaps be allowed to observe that my various,